



ELLICOTT CITY WATERSHED MASTER PLAN – SUMMER 2019 ONLINE OPEN HOUSE

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT RECEIVED

As part of the County's Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan Process, the Department of Planning and Zoning hosted an [Online Open House](#) from July 26 to August 11. The Online Open House focused on several key downtown areas where significant changes to previously-proposed master plan ideas would be likely, given the flood mitigation proposed under the [EC Safe and Sound Plan](#).

In addition to providing information about likely changes, the Online Open House provided opportunities for public input through a series of short surveys.

Respondents were asked to provide input on areas where significant changes would be likely in:

- Lower Main;
- Lots D and E;
- Lots F and G; and
- Lots A and B.

Respondents could also provide input on:

- Other geographic areas within the Tiber-Hudson Watershed;
- The overall parking strategy;
- Important views/vistas in the entire downtown core area; and
- Any other topic of their choosing.

Finally, survey respondents were asked to respond to standard questions about their relationship to Ellicott City and rate the effectiveness of the Online Open House.

This summary lists themes from comments received, beginning with a listing of major topics and considerations, followed by summaries in response to each survey question (geographic area and/or topic, with comments grouped as considerations). The master plan consultant team will use this input to update plan concepts.

Please note: statements have not been reviewed for accuracy. A few comments were received related to flooding in the Plumtree Watershed. Since the geographic scope of the Ellicott City Watershed Master Plan is limited to the Tiber-Hudson Watershed, comments related to Plumtree are not represented in this summary. These comments were instead forwarded to the Department of Public Works, the agency leading flood mitigation efforts in the Plumtree Watershed.

Summary List of Major Topics and Considerations

<u>Flood Mitigation</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Debris management and maintenance 2. Flood conveyance and retention 3. Impacts to surrounding buildings 4. Public input 5. Stormwater retrofits 	<u>Historic Preservation</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aesthetics 2. Alternatives to demolition 3. Building preservation 4. Heritage 5. Impacts to the B&O Museum 6. Recent past 7. Salvage of materials 8. Views/vistas 	<u>Emergency Management and Resiliency</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emergency alerts 2. Emergency egress 3. Emergency traffic signal coordination 4. Floodproofing 5. Public awareness 6. Safety
<u>Economic Development</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attractions 2. Business attraction 3. Business operations 4. Entrepreneurial development 5. Local businesses 6. Market trends 	<u>Environment</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Green features 2. Heat island effect 3. Impervious area 4. Land preservation 5. Pervious surfaces 6. Planting program 7. Wildlife 	<u>Parks and Public Spaces</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community branding 2. Gathering space 3. Usability
<u>Capital Project Design, Construction and Funding</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construction Impacts 2. Cost 3. Excellence 4. Fiscal equity 5. Multi-objective planning 6. Multi-purpose design 7. Overall viability 8. Partnerships 9. Phasing 10. Return on investment 	<u>New Development and Land Use Regulations</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate public facilities 2. Causes of flooding 3. Environmental protections 4. Fees 5. Improved zoning code 6. Moratorium extension 7. Stormwater requirements 	<u>Transportation, Streetscape, Sidewalks and Parking</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accessibility 2. Autonomous vehicle technology 3. Bicycles and pedestrians 4. Connectivity 5. Foot traffic 6. General maintenance 7. Local residents 8. Noise 9. Overall parking strategy 10. Parking alternatives 11. Parking convenience 12. Parking supply and demand 13. Traffic calming 14. Traffic circulation

Note: the considerations listed in the table above are not mutually exclusive to major topics. For example, 'aesthetics' appeared most frequently in comments related to historic preservation, but survey respondents also cited aesthetics related to: parks and public spaces; new development and land use regulations; and transportation, streetscape, sidewalks and parking.

Summary of Responses – Lower Main

Respondents reviewed previously-proposed master plan concepts with Safe and Sound updates before providing feedback to the question below.

Question: *What are other important objectives or considerations we should be thinking about for this area?*

Themes from Responses:

Lower Main Generally

- **Safety:** clear and visible emergency egress; rooftop escape; evacuation routes (paths, ramps, stairs) to get people from buildings to higher ground, or from outdoor areas to higher ground
- **Multi-purpose design:** plan features that can serve dual purpose as pedestrian evacuation features and town attractions
- **Business attraction:** new businesses may be attracted to Tiber Alley and St Paul
- **Traffic circulation:** make Main Street one-way to allow promenades
- **Aesthetics:** look for ways to place power lines underground during construction

The Lower Main Channel and Maryland Avenue Twin Culverts

- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** raise the Maryland Avenue bridge to convey additional flow and reduce potential for debris blockages underneath; a south tunnel as an alternative to the twin culverts
- **Debris management and maintenance:** space for a breakwater/debris collector; access for equipment and foot entry to maintain open channel area
- **Safety:** with the open culverts, there should not be activities in the channel nor kids playing there; plan to keep people (including kids, teenagers, and the homeless) out of the culverts
- **Usability:** on either side of the channel – diagonal parking, sidewalk, covered seating; gathering space with stream views; interaction with historical interpretations and open-air events
- **Aesthetics:** organic, curved, piano shaped edge along Tiber Alley walk; battered or stepped sides to storm water feature; raised bench edge rather than rail; appearance of the Maryland Avenue culverts
- **Green features:** more vegetation, less blocky, more pervious surfaces; restore not only historical buildings but also historical waterways; fish passage (fish ladder?); solar options such as panels on shade structures
- **Heritage:** use salvaged or new materials to convey past; include interpretative signage; recreate or identify the historic mill race; include metal frame outlines of buildings; use building footprints but avoid loose stone in the floodplain

Tiber Alley and the B&O Museum Area

- **Usability:** Tiber Alley, the B&O plaza and Maryland Avenue sidewalks can together become space for gathering; an attractive asset for art festivals, farmers market or craft fairs; the Tiber Alley bridge area could be expanded for festival music, vendor space for art events, or outdoor dining
- **Aesthetics:** work with business owners along Tiber Alley to prepare to become “street front”
- **Business operations:** eliminate general vehicular traffic on Tiber Alley, but ensure businesses have vehicular access for loading and unloading

Lower Main Buildings to be demolished

- **Alternatives to demolition:** preserve the Phoenix; elevate the Phoenix; preserve the four buildings from Tea on the Tiber to Maryland Avenue; construct the culverts while avoiding demolition
- **Impacts to the B&O Museum:** protect and preserve the B&O Station
- **Salvage of materials:** salvage façade elements and reuse elsewhere

Lower Main Buildings to be partially demolished

- **Building preservation:** preserve as much of the remaining buildings as possible; preserve as many 19th century buildings as possible
- **Safety:** add stairs and possibly elevator access to St Paul Street for emergency evacuation to higher ground; condemn the buildings, by their location they take the brunt of water (front and rear) and are unsafe during a flood; remove the damaged buildings, the next weather event could be their last; if the buildings compromise safety or flood mitigation, they should go
- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** give the water more room to spread out and slow down by removing the buildings; make sure modified buildings will have sufficient strength/integrity to withstand floodwater from rear
- **Aesthetics:** clean and attractive buildings
- **Public awareness:** window displays to make tourists stop, read and think
- **Usability:** make sure there is viable space for reuse; artist studio spaces; public restrooms; an information center with public restroom, vending machines, and an ATM; a flood history museum; small museums or historical exhibits; a museum showcasing the town's unique and diverse history

Lower Main Streetscape

- **Parking supply:** there is very limited parking in Lower Main; maintain on street parking; provide parking nearby
- **Parking convenience:** parking should give customers quick access to businesses; parking should be accessible to promote foot traffic to businesses
- **Parking alternatives:** bring visitors to Lower Main with a shuttle

Summary of Responses – Lots D and E

Respondents reviewed previously-proposed master plan concepts with Safe and Sound updates before providing feedback to the question below.

Question: *What are other important objectives or considerations we should be thinking about for this area?*

Responses:

Lots D and E Generally

- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** depending on permitted flow, address the constriction under the brewery annex building and Main Street; dredge the channel under Main Street to increase flow prior to tunnel construction; enlarge the drain pipe under Lot D; widen and open the channel in Lot D with more naturalized area
- **Safety:** do not add more people to the flood zone
- **Usability:** gathering space; festival and event space; farmer's market; lively and attractive destination; places to rest; a smaller amenity space
- **Green features:** water views; access to the stream in normal flow; open green space; park
- **Accessibility:** all ages and abilities

Lot D Parking Garage

- **Overall parking strategy:** take parking off Main Street and build the parking garage; Lot D is the most popular/well-used parking lot currently; additional parking is needed; new wrapped space would require additional parking; add parking elsewhere; plan to address economic impacts of construction (including loss of existing parking spaces during construction and festival relocation)
- **Traffic circulation:** ingress/egress to Main Street is difficult; expand the ramp at Old Columbia Pike for two-way traffic; access to Old Columbia Pike would be dangerous
- **Aesthetics:** build the parking garage, but only if it is wrapped; tastefully wrap the garage; wrap the garage with architecture that looks like Ellicott City; make sure the garage would not tower over existing buildings; set the garage into the hill to hide it; scale, size, bulk of the garage is critical; build a one-level deck over existing parking; do not build a parking garage, it would change the character and take away from the charm and ambiance of Tongue Row; a garage would be out of place in a town the size of Ellicott City
- **Views/vistas:** views of Old Columbia Pike from Lot D are important to town character; preserve the natural view of trees and sloping hills in Lot D; protect the "bowl"; respect the viewshed
- **Safety:** how will more people and vehicles be evacuated in a flood event?
- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** include stormwater management with new garage; include significant flood water retention underneath the garage; locate parking elsewhere to preserve Lot D as a flood water retention opportunity; if the tunnel is going to be finished in five years, the parking garage could not be built first; do not build in the floodplain, new structures will eventually get damaged or destroyed; do not invest in this area until flood mitigation (upstream and tunnel) is complete and proven
- **Green features:** include green infrastructure; add green open space instead of a garage with a "green" screen; conserve needed green space and open the waterway

Lot D Parking Garage – Continued

- **Usability:** wrap the garage with: retail, restaurants, offices, shared offices, and/or residences; pair the garage with space for festivals, picnic areas and walking paths
- **Accessibility:** a wrapped garage would provide more accessible businesses and enable wider, more accessible sidewalks with drop-off areas
- **Market trends:** do not add more retail, filling existing space in town is difficult; revisit prior economic studies to test the market; get commitments on leases or anchor tenants prior to construction; build new space as a future phase given current market conditions; fill space elsewhere, including the courthouse, before building new space
- **Local businesses:** give businesses that formerly operated in county-purchased buildings preference for new space; target small businesses rather than chain businesses; do not add more retail that would compete with existing businesses
- **Partnerships:** a public private partnership could build a wrapped garage; do not use taxpayer money to build a garage with retail, developers should take that risk; do not allow developers to build a wrapped garage

Lot E

- **Connectivity:** do not dismiss the idea of removing the brewery annex; relocation could promote an improved connection to Court Avenue and visual connection to the staircase to the courthouse

Summary of Responses – Lots F and G

Respondents reviewed previously-proposed master plan concepts with Safe and Sound updates before providing feedback to the question below.

Question: *What are other important objectives or considerations we should be thinking about for this area?*

Responses:

Lots F and G Generally

- **Flood conveyance and retention:** build the entire solution listed in the H&H study, including the second tunnel and all the other facilities (dams, storage vaults and pipe farms); add flood water retention to Lot F; do not preclude water storage under open space in Lot G; if needed, use Lot G for water retention
- **Usability:** Lot F is used for events which should continue
- **Connectivity:** build the path/trail network; add a footbridge over the Hudson to connect parking to Main Street

The Tunnel

- **Safety:** address concerns about tunnel entrance safety; make sure the tunnel comes to fruition, without the tunnel, Main Street will not be safe;
- **Construction impacts:** explore the impact of tunneling under historic properties and residences; ensure tunneling will not destroy property above; consider the impact of 24/7 construction on residents; plan for the impacts of a flash flood during tunnel construction
- **Overall viability:** address concerns about the tunnel's overall viability; provide information on the tunnel's potential failure rate and the Army Corps' review of the tunnel's functionality
- **Aesthetics:** the tunnel entrance should be gentle and natural rather than a civil engineering landmark
- **Impacts to surrounding buildings:** protect buildings near the tunnel entrance

Parking in Lots F or G

- **Overall parking strategy:** build a garage and reduce on street parking on Frederick Road; ensure parking structures can accommodate more parking overall; the Lot G parking lot is a valuable asset; parking in Lot G will be needed while the tunnel is built; make this area "long term parking" for employees, owners; if a garage is built in Lot D, a garage may not be needed in this area; if a garage is built in Lot D, this space could be used for alternatives to parking; preserve as much parking as possible; consolidate the parking in one place, not both lots
- **Foot traffic:** a parking garage in this area will provide visibility for all Main Street businesses as people walk from the garage to Lower Main
- **Safety:** build a parking garage outside the floodplain in Lot F or G where vehicles will be protected; is it wise to construct a garage adjacent to a tunnel inlet (and the associated large volume of flood water)?
- **Flood water retention and conveyance:** include stormwater management with new garage; any development in this critical area needs to have water retention and flood remediation at its core

Parking in Lots F or G - Continued

- **Green features:** a green wall could be nice
- **Aesthetics:** this area will least negatively impact the original feel of the historic district; build a garage in lot G raised to the Ellicott Mills Drive elevation with park amenities on top and an entrance from Ellicott Mills Drive; a parking garage in Lot F could fit the local topography and have minimal impact on the historic streetscape; position the tunnel inlet under an elevated parking structure; new structures must blend with local architecture
- **Usability:** wrap the garage with: artist studio space, retail, restaurants, offices and/or residences; add a roof top viewing area; make space for artists and public art
- **Accessibility:** include parking for those who cannot walk far
- **Market trends:** ensure the market is not oversaturated with retail or artist spaces; retail wrapping parking does not work everywhere
- **Local businesses:** more space for offices and/or apartments would help the retailers in town; uses that compete with existing spaces on Main are not desirable, uses that bring people to town as tourists or residents are preferable
- **Partnerships:** a public private partnership could build a wrapped garage

Park and green space

- **Overall parking strategy:** coordinate any parks and trails with additional/adequate parking; include a trolley/shuttle stop and connect to parking at the George Howard Building or courthouse; keep parking – compared to this area, Lot D is a better location for green space with a retention pond and permeable surfaces
- **Usability:** the sloping area in front of Barnard Fort is a possible natural area for performances on a wooden stage; put the Barnard Fort house to meaningful use; for Lot G, multi-use green space seems best; Lot G should be an open green space; include a small dog park in the Lot G park; do residents need park amenities?
- **Aesthetics:** make Lot F a beautiful space; the Barnard Fort house area is a beautiful location that could be developed as a park type setting; make this area a gateway
- **Views/vistas:** given the new design for water conveyance, Lot F is a great place for more public gathering space and pedestrian connections
- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** include storm water retention with a Lot G park; construct a lake that could also help with water retention
- **Green features:** with few green spaces proposed elsewhere, Lot G should be open green space; maintain as much natural and open space as possible in this area
- **Cost:** while a park with underground parking and water storage sounds ideal, there are questions about cost and feasibility
- **Heritage:** this area makes the most sense for historic interpretation; public access to the Barnard Fort house; interpretative signage on Fels Lane, the historic black community, and urban renewal; reconstruction of the old courthouse; site the log cabin near Barnard Fort

Summary of Responses – Lots A and B

Respondents reviewed previously-proposed master plan concepts with Safe and Sound updates before providing feedback to the question below.

Question: *What are other important objectives or considerations we should be thinking about for this area?*

Responses:

Lots A and B Generally

- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** trench the Patapsco; consider floodplain area around the Patapsco; consider Trolley Trail flooding and the inadequate culvert where Westchester Avenue meets the trolley Trail, the trail is being rebuilt for at least the third time; there is a large, privately owned parcel of land for sale adjacent to Lot A along the trolley trail, the Granite Hill plan calls for 12 homes to be built on the slope and will contribute to runoff
- **Safety:** plan for pedestrian safety with more than just the pedestrian bridge; consider emergency planning and community preparedness; safe access to the river; emergency egress signage along the Trolley Trail
- **Aesthetics:** simple, contextual, natural
- **Views/vistas:** re-landscape the riverfront to improve views of the B&O Station from the east
- **Connectivity:** extend the Grist Mill Trail from Ilchester to connect to the Trolley Trail
- **Local residents:** concerns from Westchester Avenue residents regarding noise, trash, parking, traffic and flooding
- **Usability:** riverfront access and amenities are key; people access the river from the Baltimore County side on “the Beach”; riverside attractions and use of the river: tubing, kayaking, swimming; signed access to the river with safety warning; parkland along the river; trash/recycling; public restrooms

The Tunnel

- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** provide more information about how the tunnel outlet will work; explain how the Patapsco will handle extra water from the tunnel; address concerns about flood water from the tunnel impacting Lot B, the Frederick Road bridge, Oella Avenue, the Wilkins-Rogers flour mill; locate the outlet below the Frederick Road bridge, below the flour mill instead of the north side of the bridge
- **Safety:** with the tunnel outlet, concerns for safety in Lot B
- **Construction impacts:** provide information on how long the tunnel will take to construct; plan for Lot B being unusable during construction
- **Aesthetics:** orient the tunnel outlet to ensure Lot B does not become an eyesore
- **Usability:** address concerns that the tunnel outlet will reduce the desirability of a Lot B pocket park and river access to the Patapsco

Lot B Riverfront Park

- **Safety:** concerns for park use with a tunnel outlet close by; make all of Lot B a park – it is in the Patapsco River floodplain and a traffic hazard for people entering/exiting Main Street; remember the train derailment
- **Usability:** benches, walking path, a riverwalk, a small outdoor amphitheater with the river as a backdrop; small concerts, performances or educational programming; river recreation; trash and recycling receptacles; there is already a wonderful small park on the Baltimore County side – no need for another in Lot B; instead of a pocket park in Lot B, make the river banks easier to access and improve the banks (remove rocks, level the surface, fix steps to the river)
- **Views/vistas:** views of the Patapsco River from a Lot B park would be highly valued; orient the park more along the river instead of in the corner; a park with river views makes more sense than a park on Fels Lane
- **Accessibility:** public use by all ages and abilities
- **Overall parking strategy:** being so close to the train, Lot B is not ideal for a park but better suited to parking; make sure no parking spaces are eliminated
- **Heritage:** Harpers Ferry flood history by river comes to mind as a model
- **Green features:** more green space is better

Lot A Parking Garage

- **Safety:** Lot A is in the floodplain, make provisions for ground-floor flooding to address safety; a garage in the Lot F/G area out of the floodplain would be a safer place for a garage
- **Overall parking strategy:** parking is very tight, so more is good; build a garage on Lot A; more parking in Lot A will help Lower Main businesses; visitors from the east will use a Lot A garage; a Lot A garage is not optimal but may be necessary; build a Lot D garage before considering a Lot A garage; build structures in lots D/F near the primary parking demand, and not in Lots A/B; a shuttle/trolley from a Lot A garage up Main Street; a shuttle/trolley from lot to lot; scooters from Lot A
- **Usability:** wrap a Lot A parking garage with elevated river-view dining; install secure parking for bikes in a garage with Trolley Trail access; trash/recycling receptacles at every parking lot
- **Aesthetics:** a Lot A garage is out of character for Ellicott City's historic character and small-town charm
- **Connectivity:** a garage with pedestrian bridge would provide access and convenience
- **Partnerships:** discuss the Lot A garage with Baltimore County; get a statement of support from Baltimore County

Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge

- **Safety:** a pedestrian access is appealing and another way to get folks to higher ground; design should accommodate both bicycle and pedestrian traffic in both directions; take close proximity of the railroad into account
- **Overall parking strategy:** a pedestrian bridge would be helpful if additional parking is added in Lot A
- **Aesthetics:** a new bridge should pay homage to the trolley bridge and not be a modern cable-stayed design; use the style of the old Bollman Bridge that once existed for the trolley

Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge Continued

- **Connectivity:** a pedestrian-bicycle bridge would be an awesome connection to the former Trolley Trail system and pedestrian link to Oella and Catonsville; add pedestrian bridges on both sides of the current bridge; provide steps from the pedestrian bridge to the Oella Avenue sidewalk; activate the riverfront near Maryland Avenue by cantilevering a pedestrian bridge on the EC south side over the channel and over the railroad tracks
- **Usability:** one wonders if there'd be enough foot traffic to warrant this bridge, people could just walk over the current Frederick Road bridge
- **Partnerships:** partner with Baltimore County and the State of Maryland on funding
- **Cost:** do not divert money to this project when there is already a functional bridge and the town has other needs

Summary of Responses – Other Geographic Areas

Respondents were asked to identify considerations for the West End, the Courthouse area, the overall Tiber-Hudson Watershed, and other areas.

Question: *The master plan concepts in 2018 covered many other ideas for the West End, the Courthouse area, the overall Tiber-Hudson Watershed, and other areas. If you have any important considerations for these geographic areas, please share them below.*

Responses:

Watershed

- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** add automatic barricades at intersections to Main Street; fix drainage problems, especially drainage coming off Church Road to Main Street; add drains and tunnels to Church Road; mitigate flooding from New Cut Branch with upstream water retention and reduced development
- **Public awareness:** add watershed boundary signage on major roadways stating “Entering Tiber-Hudson Watershed: Drains to Historic Ellicott City
- **Connectivity:** better connect the West End with Lower Main; hiking, bicycling trails along four tributaries connected to each of the four tributaries; promote visitation to historic sites along tributaries with trail network

West End

- **Safety:** calm traffic from Rogers Avenue to the Patapsco with speed bumps and raised crosswalks; address racing cars; add a traffic circle to Rogers Avenue – this intersection is dangerous for vehicles and pedestrians; add a traffic light at Rogers Avenue and Frederick Road; add speed and pedestrian signage
- **Connectivity:** fix the St. Luke’s hill to regain sidewalk and crosswalks and improve traffic flow; protective sidewalks
- **Multi-purpose design:** design the best solution for stormwater mitigation/retention, affordable housing, economic development and sustainable building materials
- **Green features:** vegetative buffers
- **Public awareness:** more focus on community resilience
- **Heritage:** respect the history of the West End
- **Aesthetics:** spruce up the West End; address dilapidated and abandoned buildings
- **Traffic circulation:** address traffic flow through the West End
- **Land preservation:** the county could purchase the Mt. Zion space for use as high ground recreation, evacuation, and community space so it is not developed further
- **Building preservation:** limit impacts of flood mitigation projects on historic structures
- **Flood conveyance and retention:** capture and slow water before it reaches the business district; add stormwater mitigation areas to the West End Service Center site instead of new housing and a road
- **Public input:** flood mitigation projects should include neighbor and community input
- **Impervious area:** the West End Service Center is a major contributor to the hardscape

Courthouse

- **Market trends:** it is hard to see a need for more retail or restaurant in this area; the courthouse area represents a unique set of challenges that can be met with a unique opportunity; conduct an economic study/model of a unique hotel as a reuse of the courthouse
- **Local businesses:** the last thing we need is more retail competing with Main Street retail; a hotel or apartments would be an economic boon for the area; government office space would be a welcome addition; a unique hotel would draw people for overnight stays, increase meals at restaurants and make EC a weekend trip rather than a day trip
- **Usability:** use the court buildings as incubator business space; consider new uses for the surrounding buildings that now hold court-related services since they will follow the courthouse to its new location; allow ceremonial functions to remain onsite like marriages and community licenses; incorporate the jail in the plans – how can it be used as a shop, tour shop, etc.; repurpose the courthouse with retail/restaurant before new spaces are added elsewhere in the downtown core; avoid the courthouse becoming a white elephant
- **Partnerships:** courthouse structure could be used as a multi-use facility with business partnerships
- **Green features:** add solar panel covered parking to the courthouse parking lot – cooler cars, cool outdoor venue and clean power
- **Overall parking strategy:** courthouse area would be ideal for overflow parking and regular shuttle service
- **Construction impacts:** fully develop and implement the tunnel solution prior to implementation of a courthouse solution, as there is only so much change this town can take at once

Summary of Responses – Overall Parking Strategy

Respondents were asked to identify considerations for the overall parking strategy.

Question: *Thinking about potential changes as described in this Online Open House, what should we be considering for the overall downtown parking strategy?*

Responses:

Overall Parking Strategy

- **Impervious area:** consolidate parking as much as possible; a parking deck that scales up to minimize additional hardscape
- **Accessibility:** balance consolidation of parking with accessibility; keep handicapped spaces on Main Street; handicapped parking should be accessible for residents
- **Safety:** less parking will be safer for all; get the cars off Main Street and move parking up the hills; post emergency exit routes from parking areas; the mountable curb concept seems dangerous to pedestrians if vehicles try to park on the “temporary” sidewalk area; consider European-style electronic bollards that can be raised and lowered for loading and unloading; address pedestrian safety around garages with lighting
- **Foot traffic:** prohibit on-street parking to widen sidewalks so there is room to walk safely (and room for outdoor dining); widening the sidewalks in some areas and having less on-street parking would improve the atmosphere; the existing narrow sidewalks, traffic, and on-street parking make the pedestrian experience terrible; make Main Street more pedestrian friendly with wider sidewalks
- **Flood water conveyance and retention:** once flood mitigation is in place, the danger from cars parked along Main Street will be removed
- **Local businesses:** retention of Lot D parking benefits the central portion of the street immensely; keep spaces for loading/unloading on Main Street; do not remove on-street parking spaces – Lower Main businesses would be severely impacted if on-street parking is removed
- **Local residents:** keep the on-street parking in the West End where there are homes; residential-only parking in the West End; all residential units should have parking
- **Phasing:** start with the Lot D garage; the parking garage is an important element that should happen sooner rather than later; do not delay the construction of flood mitigation projects (like the tunnel) to build a parking garage first – take action on flood mitigation first rather than parking
- **Aesthetics:** a large parking garage in Lot D would take away from the character of the town; parking garages should be covered by storefronts; there are condo developments built around a garage and thereby eliminate the potential eyesore; parking structures should fit in with historic district charm; low-rise parking garage; parking garages should not be allowed; street parking can be an eyesore; historic-looking trolley
- **Parking supply:** Lower Main needs the parking spaces in Lot B more than a pocket park; add parking on St Paul by the church; building a three-level deck on Lot F and a one-level deck on Lot D could recoup spaces lost if Lots G and E become parks/open space and if new commercial space in the courthouse uses spaces at the courthouse lot

Overall Parking Strategy Continued

- **Traffic circulation:** get most parking off Main Street with a garage in Lot F and a smaller garage in Lot A; any new parking garages should be out of the Main Street area, in Lot A and the courthouse area; if a garage is built it should be in Lot G with perhaps apartments; existing on-street parking obstructs sight lines for turning vehicles – reduce/eliminate on-street parking in favor of well-designed parking garages; consider a detour or toll for commuter traffic; plan shuttle routes to avoid Main Street traffic (route could begin at the courthouse, loop to bottom of Church, then up Court and back); keep traffic moving; more ingress/egress points to lots
- **Construction impacts:** the courthouse parking lot will be a crucial asset during construction of capital projects; additional parking needs to be explored since spaces will be needed for construction staging; parking garage construction should not be drawn out and impact long-term businesses and residents who rely on parking 24/7; parking is a problem and for the construction period of the tunnel, will be a larger problem
- **Parking demand:** additional parking should serve the existing footprint on Main and not detract from it; account for current parking demand, parking for new retail plus 20% for future growth; the construction of the tunnel could be a tourist attraction; two parking garages are needed and possibly an ongoing shuttle service during peak times to use the courthouse and George Howard lots; typically one can find parking on busy days if one waits long enough
- **Multi-purpose design:** a parking garage can be combined with affordable housing
- **Green features:** low-level garages with solar panels on top; historic-looking trolley that runs on renewable energy; parking lots should be “checkerboard” cement with foliage planted in the open spaces
- **Parking alternatives:** frequent small shuttles on busy days; run shuttle buses from George Howard on evenings and weekends; maintain the courthouse lot as parking and run shuttles from there to Main Street; trolleys or electric scooters in addition to a parking garage; connect parking uphill with innovative shared transportation; trolley that runs from lot to lot; trolley that makes frequent stops up and down Main Street; trolley on weekends and holidays; eliminate parking in favor of pedestrian/bicycle amenities and a circulator tram
- **Cost:** look at grants for a shuttle; parking should not always be free; provide incentives to use the courthouse lot; consider the return of investment on parking improvements
- **Autonomous vehicle technology:** an autonomous “trolley” circulator; autonomous vehicles
- **Community branding:** rename the parking lots to provide a sense of place

Summary of Responses – Views/Vistas

Respondents were asked to identify important views and vistas in the core area.

Question: *As we continue with the master plan, what are important views/vistas to consider throughout the core area?*

Responses:

- **Views in Lower Main:** Tiber Alley will be exposed – consider façade improvements along Tiber Alley; create areas that draw people to Lower Main to shop; design the Maryland Avenue culverts to look like an attractive double-arched stone bridge instead of a road with concrete culverts underneath
- **Views in Lot D:** a parking garage would damage vistas and seem over-scaled for the area; views from Lot D up and around Old Columbia Pike are important, and so forth from Old Columbia Pike down
- **Views of natural areas:** the Tiber; the Hudson; the Patapsco; anything that's water; anything that's green
- **Views of the streetscape:** Main Street at the firehouse museum; Ellicott Mills and Main Street; the view coming over the Patapsco bridge should be preserved, including the buildings, if possible; removing above-ground power lines would be a huge plus
- **Views of architecture:** historic buildings; the Phoenix; the courthouse; the castle; mills; Barnard Fort
- **Views from the courthouse area:** an incredible area that deserves attention
- **Views of the Lot E staircase:** connections to the stair up and from the courthouse lot down to Main Street are important, especially if a push to use the courthouse parking lot is made
- **Views of bridges:** railroad bridge; Ellicott City sign on the bridge; Patapsco bridge

Detailed Responses – Other Topics

Respondents were asked to identify other topics for consideration.

Question: *What other topics should we consider for this final round of planning?*

Responses:

Overall Vision

- **Green features:** paint the future of Ellicott City as the model mill town for resiliency; a bold vision for sustainability could attract private investment from companies leading the way on climate change, sustainable building materials, and resiliency
- **Multi-objective planning:** a holistic vision including residential, economic development, tourism, transportation, and flood mitigation will make fundraising easier; funding sources will depend on planning objectives
- **Excellence:** excellence in design and planning, execution; this is the one chance to do it right; look at the best and make it the best; beauty and magic
- **Attractions:** Ellicott City needs something long-term to draw people – candidates include green space, a trolley, sustainable products, history and a touch of disaster tourism
- **Safety:** safety is the number one consideration; provide for the safety of all our merchants and visitors; keep the cars out of the area to avoid car drownings; tear it all down; the correct solution is not to build there, and not to encourage any more people to risk their lives and livelihoods by settling in a particularly dangerous geography; the town, built in an area prone to flooding and not designed for large influxes of people, should not be an economic development zone

Flood Mitigation

- **Phasing:** act quickly to start and finish flood mitigation projects first; put all non-flood mitigation projects on hold until flood mitigation projects are completed
- **Overall viability:** the success of this plan seems to depend on construction of the tunnel – how will it be funded, when will construction begin, how long will it take, how will it impact residents of the area and can it be completed before OEC floods again?
- **Additional flood conveyance and retention:** more water retention facilities; far more water retention upstream; address flooding causes “up the hill”; trench the river; widen the mouth of the river; a long-range plan for potential future additions to flood management facilities as the climate continues to change, including a relocation strategy for West End Service
- **Aesthetics:** instead of using rip-rap to prevent landslides, terrace to create a stable, functional space that is aesthetically pleasing; the tunnel has sucked some magic out of the former plan; what will debris catchers look like?
- **Debris management and maintenance:** slow the flow of water and collect trees and vehicles to protect the B&O and prevent the Maryland Avenue culverts from becoming clogged; how will debris catchers function?
- **Stormwater retrofits:** modify newer developments to create less runoff
- **Cost:** this area will flood again and again due to geography – remove damaged structures and stop pouring taxpayer dollars into a futile attempt to preserve and augment an economic loss

Resiliency

- **Floodproofing:** to be a model of resiliency, use flood resilient materials; help all Lower Main businesses truly floodproof their buildings with floodproof doors, windows and proper drainage/retention walls
- **Green features:** to be a model of resiliency, use green infrastructure
- **Cost:** seek out available grants for resilient materials and green infrastructure that change the net cost to the county; help business and property owners with the high cost of flood insurance

Emergency Management

- **Emergency egress:** rooftop safety access; practiced and planned evacuation routes which are posted in all businesses and parking lots
- **Emergency alerts:** louder sirens
- **Emergency traffic signal coordination:** program all stoplights to be green on Main Street and red on side streets in a flood event

Environment

- **Green features:** more green, less gray, no infill; preserve existing green space; save as much green space as possible; maximize green space; create some green space; keep the trees and natural areas; keep deep root systems; use natural resources to mitigate flooding; use land for green space and water retention instead of development
- **The heat island effect:** Main Street is a heat island in summer – provide as much greenery as possible
- **Planting program:** major planting projects, everywhere; more plants to soak it up; plant and biochar options; native plants to slow the flow
- **Pervious surfaces:** porous/pervious materials to allow water to pass through; do not expand hard surfaces
- **Wildlife:** increase natural spaces that support wildlife; native plants to provide wildlife habitat
- **Land preservation:** watershed land needs to be protected/preserved; land preservation and land trusts; instead of using land for development, use land for water retention, environmental/natural areas and wildlife
- **Multi-objective planning:** enhance and celebrate waterways and natural environs with ecotourism, parks, and outdoor venues for sport, leisure and performances

New Development and Land Use Regulations

- **Environmental protections:** preserve as much green space as possible; more green, less gray, no infill; stop approving waivers that impact the environment; protect the environment; no waivers for tree removal; expand steep slope regulations
- **Pervious surfaces:** save as much permeable surface as possible; consider upriver permeable surfaces and construction; do not add more impervious surface; stop covering everything in concrete; less development; reduce additional development period; change development regulations to limit increases in impervious surfaces

New Development and Land Use Regulations Continued

- **Extension of the moratorium:** incorporate an indefinite freeze on new construction in the watershed; no new housing; stop development upstream; the moratorium on development in the watershed west of the historic district should be made permanent; upslope development moratorium until mandatory runoff prevention can be instituted; stop building anywhere near (or that will affect) Main Street
- **Aesthetics:** no more development of cookie cutter homes; no generic multi-family housing on the courthouse site; limit new construction in the historic district to a small (15,000 square foot) structure for businesses displaced by the proposed demolition; the 2018 plans contemplated too much new development – be more sensitive to the historic character of Ellicott City
- **Building preservation:** no waivers for historic building demolition
- **Stormwater requirements:** require any new construction to incorporate water retention measures that accommodate more water than runs off the lot in a peak rain event; address the upper watersheds and stormwater management to reduce the volume of water downstream; require developments to manage many times more stormwater onsite than is displaced with development
- **Stormwater retrofits:** address runoff from newer developments uphill; rather than alter lower Main, look upstream for newer areas to demolish or add retention ponds
- **Causes of flooding:** treat the cause (over development, waivers, deforestation), not the symptom
- **Safety:** no new development in lower Ellicott City until the area is safe; no more buildings in this battered town
- **Adequate public facilities:** do not increase development – the infrastructure and schools cannot support any more; no more residential areas and businesses, the infrastructure and schools are already overwhelmed
- **An improved zoning code:** a good and fair zoning code that doesn't require variances
- **Fees:** raise developer fees to put them in line with Montgomery County

Economic Development

- **Local businesses:** preserve small business ownership; no chain stores nor chain restaurants; don't add new retail that will compete with existing retail
- **Attractions:** a movie theater, music venue, hotel or other type of use that brings people to town; give people reasons to come, to linger and to shop
- **Market trends:** current and future demand for retail and restaurant space; viable commerce; long-term commercial viability; a plan for built space driven by an economic development plan for Main Street; look at retail demand before wrapping a parking garage
- **Entrepreneurial development:** an incubator could benefit OEC
- **Construction impacts:** during demolition and reconstruction, minimize impact to surrounding stores; maintain access to stores for business owners and customers; if access is limited and impacts are not minimized, compensate business owners for reduced business; search for grants or subsidy programs to assist Lower Main merchants between now and construction completion; plan for traffic circulation during building removals

Transportation

- **Autonomous vehicle technology:** autonomous vehicles ETA 2020
- **Parking alternatives:** use shared transportation modes to connect Main Street to remote parking at the courthouses, private office building, and George Howard complex; explore how shared transportation modes might themselves become attractions to town; frequent headway trolley-like shuttles
- **Bicycles and pedestrians:** keep Main Street bicycle friendly; make it more walkable; make Main Street a pedestrian-only zone; place more emphasis on access routes to town for pedestrians and bicycles, from surrounding neighborhoods (along Old Columbia Pike, communities in the Autumn Rust area, along New Cut, and from Toll House/Manahan Drive to Main Street/Hill Street); make Rogers Avenue down to Main Street safer for pedestrians; design emphasis should shift from auto/truck focused to pedestrian/bike/café-culture focused; less emphasis on car traffic, with more pedestrian walking/usable space

Sidewalks and Streetscape

- **Green features:** new products like hempcrete could put Ellicott City on the forefront of environmental sustainability; plant trees, shrubs and flowers (rain gardens?);
- **Debris management and maintenance:** bricks become missiles in a flood situation – stamped concrete is the best way to go; thick concrete sidewalks to protect buildings
- **Heritage:** historically, sidewalks were not bricks, but cement
- **Usability:** maximize usable pedestrian space; wider sidewalks on the north side of Main; remove the on-street parking and widen the sidewalks; broad sidewalks with shade, greenery, and day and night activities; place benches for people to rest/gather for sociability and aesthetics
- **Aesthetics:** a cohesive look is important – right now the mishmash of materials is unattractive; consistent materials to avoid a hodge-podge appearance; it has been over three years since the sidewalk has looked normal; the power lines are giant; bury the utilities while new sidewalks are under construction – the utility lines are an eyesore; the sidewalks could become a beautiful focal point
- **Safety:** people must be able to walk safely along Main Street; people shouldn't have to watch their footing on sidewalks; the Emory and Church Street sidewalks are broken and trip hazards; adequate lighting at night
- **General maintenance:** Emory and Church Streets are neglected/need resurfacing
- **Accessibility:** make the sidewalk accessible; sidewalks that can handle wheelchairs and double strollers
- **Noise:** the sound of the water in the Tiber should be louder on the sidewalk than the sound of traffic
- **Bicycles and pedestrians:** room for pedestrians and bikes
- **Traffic calming:** calm traffic with speed bumps/raised crosswalks; slow traffic through Main Street
- **Traffic circulation:** consider the flow of vehicular traffic; Main Street should become one-way
- **Connectivity:** consider the flow of foot traffic; add a crosswalk at the bend in the road in front of Caplan's; more crosswalks where legal crossing of Frederick Road takes place; link to the Patapsco and Baltimore county
- **Flood conveyance and retention:** pervious surfacing to allow infiltration should be a priority in all sidewalk and parking areas

Parks and Public Spaces

- **Gathering space:** OEC is lacking gathering space – reevaluate where the humans will be in this plan
- **Usability:** make one or a few spaces an outdoor green and entertainment space; Howard County is full of families with kids and everyone wants a place that is easy to walk around, has places to eat, and entertainment; playground for children; Pokemon gyms; water fountains; benches; newer public restrooms; places to sit; directory board with businesses/museums; food gardens
- **Community branding:** bring back the clock on the B&O plaza – it is a symbol of overcoming two floods
- **Public awareness:** street art on storm drains; in the future, after buildings are demolished, a large-scale mural depicting the streetscape prior to building demolition
- **Aesthetics:** ask for community input before painting any more murals; don't add anything modern that takes away from the charm of the city (like the eggplant)

Historic Preservation

- **Aesthetics:** maintain the feel of Old Ellicott City; keep the area looking historic; the “look” of OEC should be paramount; preserve the character and charm of historic Ellicott City; preserve the historic aspects/feel; preserve the character – use natural stone and brick on all exposed surfaces; historic character should remain intact - the architectural designed precedent images of parking garages seemed like a good start
- **Building preservation:** preserve as much as possible while making the town more flood resilient; safety is first, but a thoughtful plan that keeps the character of the street intact is important; primary focus should be preserving historic structures and town character
- **The recent past:** remember the recent past is important
- **Heritage:** the history of buildings is important; educating visitors of the unique history and importance of Ellicott City is important
- **Usability:** the uses of buildings is important

Funding and Financing

- **Cost:** affordability; how are concerns about the cost of the tunnel being addressed?
- **Fiscal equity:** if the county and public at large is paying for this substantial work, the work should be focused on serving the county and public at large; reduce the tax burden on other areas of the county when focusing on improvements to this one geographic area; a lot of tax dollars are being spent in one small section of the county; this small geographic area will be getting a large face lift while other parts of the county suffer
- **Return on investment:** reduce cost and risk to taxpayers; previous engineering studies showed it is prohibitively expensive to make this area completely flood safe